

13 Commandments That Matter For Recovery

By **Jamie Shuttleworth**, EVP, Director of Strategic Planning, Draftfcb Chicago
and **Michael Fassnacht**, Worldwide Chief Strategy Officer, Draftfcb

BUCK UP BRAND STEWARDS.



Michael Fassnacht (L) and Jamie Shuttleworth (R)

Opportunity is knocking.

The marketing industry has been talking recession for a year now. It's led some to focus on the past, clinging to reactive thinking or lessons from a history that has little relevance to the current environment. At Draftfcb, we prefer to look at the silver lining. With massive change comes massive opportunity and we intend to leverage that opportunity for our clients.

So we've begun looking forward. We believe success will come from actively seeking ways to re-position our clients for recovery. We've begun searching for the inflexion point of growth within this curve. To create that point, we believe we must harness change, take advantage of current circumstances and take bold action.

That is why we've boiled down the wisdom from our clients, from consultants, from bloggers, from consumers and from our own network to craft 13 Commandments for brands that have had enough of reacting to the recession and are ready to **own recovery**. The time for action is now.

1. Steal share with a value assault.

A recession is a zero-sum game and you should be counting faster. Comparative advertising, investing to increase share-of-voice, or a frontal assault on your competitor's weakest spot are all to your advantage. So identify your competitor's Achilles' Heel and whip out those arrows. Find the fatal flaw – and win big.

2. Flex your brand strength.

Enter a recession and Private Labels thrive – they grow up, down and sideways, ranging from discount through premium; now they're becoming pervasive as their store formats proliferate into areas like convenience. To succeed against private-labels-on-steroids, Brands must build broad platforms, innovating their way into adjacencies and new price tiers, so customers' changing needs are met within the brand's boundaries.

3. Lure & secure customers who look away

Value is a relative thing. It all depends on whom you compare yourself to. In a price-sensitive market where customers are trading down, QSRs target casual dining. Mass haircare targets salons. But after luring them, the Recovery challenge is to secure them, building out offers that will retain them when their confidence returns.

4. Segment. Segment. Re-segment.

Not every consumer group is losing its buying power. Not all geographic regions are being hit in the same way or time. Recession is local. Find the segments that can lead you through to Recovery. Recut your data to identify, understand and demonstrate that your brand values today's most valued customer.

5. Lock on to new shopping rituals

This recession has taught us new shopping behaviors and a new consciousness where saving is cooler than spending, couponing smarter than full price, and blogging with other moms for tips more trustworthy. Planning for shopping trips, sticking to lists and comfortably shifting between mass and discounters without stigma – all will be new rituals, very likely to stay for a long time. Brands that embrace these new behaviors will pull further ahead and stay there.

6. Redefine value in uniquely ownable ways.

Everyone's telling a value story, so what can you say that they haven't already heard a million times? Value is no longer just a better-price story. Smart marketers are figuring out ways to re-frame their point of difference and tell their unique value story in a way that builds awareness, action and loyalty – all at the same time.

7. Lend a helping hand.

"We're all in this together" extends to brands as well. In times of anxiety, people look for more than a good deal, they look for empathy. What can your brand offer to make their shopping trip a little less stressful, their purchase a little more reassuring, or their life just a little easier? Helping in these tough times builds lasting bonds that lead to Recovery.

8. Let them spend virtuously.

This time, most consumers recognize that almost all of us helped spend our way into this mess. So more than ever, they want to feel good about how they spend their precious resources this time. Whether they're a frugalista penny-pinching for their child's college fund, or just a good neighbor buying a brand that gives back to the community, help them feel better about how they spend. And they'll stick with you well into Recovery.

9. Be a bright and steady beacon.

Recessions can make some brands schizophrenic in the face of competitor price cuts, store brand advances and ever-evolving consumer sentiment. But inconsistency gives people even more reason to stray. Brands focused on Recovery provide optimism, reassuring stability and security, not erratic tactics or compromised quality. Know what your brand stands for and stick to it.

10. Remind consumers of your love story with them.

People may rationally redefine and recalculate value, but they haven't lost their emotions. So don't forget the points of passion and connection that your consumers have always had with your brands. Brands can gently lead the way to Recovery by reminding consumers that there's more than just price to their relationship with you.

11. Don't stand still; innovate and soar.

Many powerhouse brands were introduced during recessions—think iPod, Swiffer, Crest Whitening Strips. Owning Recovery means helping your brands gain a leadership position when the dust settles. So use this time to think long-term, search even harder for innovative ideas to extend the brand. Invest in your brand and help take its vision forward.

12. Create your own silver lining

As the effects of a slumping economy hurt one aspect of your business, they may help another. The same is true for consumers—as they spend less on one thing, they may be doing more of another—which can present upside opportunities for you. Uncover these newfound behaviors, sniff out newfound channels and sources. Grab the growth opportunities and find a way for your brand to get in on the action.

13. Give your data a workout

There's no more valuable Recovery resource than your brand's data. Look within—optimize your operations and cut costs without cutting corners. Tighten up on category shelf management. Measure your marketing spend, maximize your media mix, and hold ideas accountable. The more calculated you are, the bolder you can be.

For more information on how your company can own recovery, email Jamie.Shuttleworth@draftfcb.com or Michael.Fassnacht@draftfcb.com